



Informational Notes for First Responders and Officials

Bulletin #80 – September 9, 2005

SEMA's Homepage: sema.dps.mo.gov

Missouri Establishes New Donations Hotline

Anyone wishing to volunteer or donate to the Hurricane Katrina victims can call a new State Emergency Management Agency Donations Information Hotline at 866-623-9385. Trained volunteers will help callers between the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., seven days a week.

The Missouri call center can coordinate donations and volunteer opportunities for Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and Missouri. On Friday, the Red Cross estimated that almost 6000 individuals had self-evacuated and were staying with family, friends or faith-based organizations in Missouri.

Monetary donations are still preferred because it allows hurricane survivors to purchase items they need in their local communities. Many of the Gulf Coast communities are not prepared to accept, store or distribute unsolicited items.

Authorities in Louisiana and Mississippi ask that volunteers work with an established disaster response organization such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army or faith-based group. Trained volunteers will be given an assignment in a specific area. Self-deployed volunteers in both states are draining much needed resources that could be used to assist victims.

Hurricane Katrina Response

SEMA's website: www.sema.dps.mo.gov lists contact information for citizens wishing to volunteer for the Hurricane Katrina recovery efforts in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama.

Area Coordinator Meetings...

Area A:	September 22, 2005	10 a.m.	911 Center, Carrollton
Area B:	September 13, 2005	6:30 p.m.	Jim Sears Technical Center, Edina
Area C:	September 14, 2005	10 a.m.	St. Louis County EMA, Chesterfield
Area D:	October 13, 2005	10 a.m.	Smith's Restaurant, Bolivar
Area F:	September 28, 2005	10:30 a.m.	Armory Sports Complex, Columbia

KC Social Security Offices Deliver Services to Hurricane Katrina Victims

Social Security Administration employees in the Kansas City Region (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas) are providing the best possible service to citizens affected by Hurricane Katrina, regardless of where they are physically located.

The Social Security Administration is: 1) Ensuring evacuees continue to receive the benefits they rely upon; 2) Implementing emergency procedures for replacement of Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) checks and deposits, including flexibility in issuing immediate payments; 3) Staffing emergency assistance centers, when and where they are established, to handle benefit inquiries and provide a full range of services; 4) Implementing an expedited claims process and invoking emergency evidentiary procedures; 5) Issuing replacement Social Security and Medicare cards, and SSN

Verification Printouts (verification printouts are as good as a Social Security Card, and provide immediate verification of a person's Social Security Number).

More information about Social Security disaster response call 1-800-772-1213, and on the Internet at www.socialsecurity.gov/emergency. Or contact the Regional Communications Office by telephone at 816.936.5740, or by email at kc.rpao@ssa.gov.

FEMA's Expedited Assistance Program Facts

FEMA's Expedited Assistance Program provides advanced funds to disaster victims for immediate needs of individuals and families displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Currently the amount of money being distributed through this special expedited assistance is \$2,000 per qualified household, which can be used for emergency purchases and disaster-related needs such as food, shelter, clothing and personal necessities.

To receive expedited assistance, Individuals must register with FEMA by either going online to www.fema.gov or calling FEMA's toll-free registration line at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) - TTY 800-462-7585. Disaster victims are encouraged to register on-line due to the possibility of high call volume. In addition, phone lines are open 24-hours, 7 days a week.

Once individuals register with FEMA for assistance, expedited assistance will be made available to individuals through electronic funds transfer (EFT) directly into their bank account, or issued a check. FEMA is working with the US Postal Service to determine the best way to get checks through the mail to a temporary address.

The expedited assistance being made available to individuals will be only a portion, and serves as an advance, of the total assistance many people may need or be eligible for, and normal eligibility determinations will result in subsequent payments of assistance in the future.

FEMA's New Debit Card Program Facts

The debit card is a pilot program that is being made available in the Houston Astrodome, as well as San Antonio and Dallas, and represents one form of distributing expedited assistance to thousands of evacuees housed in those shelters. The debit card pilot program was stopped in Louisiana. The astrodome was selected, as it's the largest concentrated shelter population. Based on how well it works, and the needs in other areas, a decision will be made as to how effective it is compared to the other forms of getting expedited assistance to people.

The debit cards will be immediately loaded with the \$2,000 of expedited assistance and handed to the applicant. Debit cards are very similar to credit cards in that they can be used to withdraw cash from ATMs and make purchases at locations with the Master Card logo just as with a regular bank-issued card.

The emergency funds distributed through debit cards do not provide victims with more assistance than what others may get, but adds an additional delivery method to help those who are unable to access bank accounts or mail delivery. People who will be eligible for the debit card will be extremely limited.

If You Suspect Fraud

What does FEMA do if it suspects fraud? The agency asks that if individuals suspect fraud or abuse of any FEMA programs to contact the fraud hotline at 1-800323-8603.